

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04476 161312Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 ONY-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----088562 161317Z /46 R  
O 161201Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3956

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4476

STADIS//////////

FOR DRAPER FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS, SY US  
SUBJECT: SYRIAN JEWRY:MARRIAGE PROPOSALS AND  
PAROLE

REF: STATE 166484, 165514  
DAMASCUS 4475

HEREWITH IS TEXT OF PAPER I SUBMITTED TO DAOUDY  
TODAY UNDER COVERING LETTER DISCRIBED TO ATHERTON  
IN DAMASCUS REFTEL:

QTE

INTEREST IN THE SITUATION OF SOME 500 SYRIAN JEWISH  
WOMEN WISHING TO MARRY BUT UNABLE TO FIND ELIGIBLE  
JEWISH HUSBANDS IN SYRIA GREW WITH THE VISITS OF CONGRESSMEN  
WAXMAN AND SOLARZ TO DAMASCUS IN THE LATTER PART OF 1976  
JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS WITH WHOM THEY MET TOLD THEM  
THAT THIS WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM WHICH THE COMMUNITY  
FACED IN SYRIA. THEY TOOK BACK TO THE UNITED STATES THE  
VIEW THAT THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE FOR SYRIAN JEWS WERE  
MUCH BETTER THAN MANY AMERICANS HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE;  
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BUT THEY ALSO RETURNED DETERMINED TO WORK ON THE PROBLEM  
OF JEWISH WOMEN UNABLE TO FIND HUSBANDS.

IN JANUARY, THE U.S. EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS WAS INFORMED  
BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS THAT A PRESIDENTIAL  
DECREE HAD BEEN ISSUED JANUARY 10 STATING THAT UNMARRIED  
SYRIAN JEWISH WOMEN WOULD BE ALLOWED TO APPLY FRO PERMISSION

TO MARRY FAORIGNERS IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER SYRIAN CITIZENS. IN WASHINGTON, OWING TO THE GREAT CONCERN BEING EXPRESSED TO THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE ON THIS ISSUE BY THE CONGRESS, THIS INFORMATION WAS GIVEN TO A NUMBER OF KEY CONGRESSMEN. IT WAS WELL RECEIVED AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE FAVORABLE COMMENTS MADE AT HEARINGS BEFORE THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES LAST MARCH.

IN MARCH 1977, TWO PROMINENT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK WHOSE FAMILIES HAD ORIGINALLY COME FROM SYRIA VISITED DAMASCUS, ALEPPO AND QAMISHLI FOR THE PURPOSE OF VISITING RELATIVES, REESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY GENERALLY, AND PARTICULARLY TO ASSIST, FOLLOWING TRADITIONAL CUSTOM, IN ARRANGING MARRIAGES BETWEEN SYRIAN JEWISH WOMEN AND ELIGIBLE JEWISH MEN IN THE UNITED STATES. THEY MET AND TALKED WITH MANY UNMARRIED WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

UPON RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES, THEY ARRANGED MARRIAGES WITH A NUMBER OF AMERICAN JEWISH MEN WHO CONSEQUENTLY WROTE FORMAL PROPOSALS OF MARRIAGE TO SPECIFIED SYRIAN JEWISH WOMEN. THESE PROPOSALS WERE SWORN TO AND NOTARIZED BY AUTHORIZED AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND CERTIFIED BY THE SYRIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. THEY WERE SENT TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL IN DAMASCUS DURING JUNE-  
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JULY 1977. TO DATE, TWELVE SUCH PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AND PRESENTED BY THE JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL TO THE APPROPRIATE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES FOR APPROVAL.

THE TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK RETURNED TO SYRIA IN JULY 1977 IN THE HOPES OF ESCORTING SOME OF THESE 12 YOUNG WOMEN BACK TO NEW YORK AND ALSO TO ARRANGE ADDITIONAL MARRIAGES IN THE FUTURE. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT UNDERSTANDS THAT ADDITIONAL MARRIAGE PROPOSALS MAY BE FORTHCOMING.

FURTHERMORE, SEVERAL AMERICAN JEWISH MEN HAVE COME TO SYRIA TO MEET AND MARRY SYRIAN JEWISH WOMEN. THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF ONE SPECIFIC PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE SYRIAN AUTHORITIES BUT APPROVAL HAS NOT YET BEEN GRANTED. MEANWHILE, THE MAN IN QUESTION HAS SPENT MORE THAN A MONTH IN SYRIA AT A HEAVY EXPENSE TO HIMSELF. BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTY AND EXPENSE INVOLVED FOR THE ORDINARY AMERICAN CITIZEN TO LEAVE HIS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAVEL TO SYRIA FOR PROLONGED PERIODS, IT IS EXPECTED THAT MOST MARRIAGE PROPOSALS WILL BE MADE THROUGH WRITTEN AND NOTARIZED

POWERS OF ATTORNEY RATHER THAN ACTUAL TRAVEL TO SYRIA.

OWING TO THE GREAT INTEREST WHICH THIS ISSUE HAS AROUSED IN THE UNITED STATES, AS WELL AS HIS OWN HUMANITARIAN CONCERN, PRESIDENT CARTER RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD IN GENEVA IN MAY 1977. PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD'S RESPONSE, AS THE U.S. UNDERSTOOD IT, WAS THAT SUCH CASES WOULD BE EXAMINED ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS. THE WHITE HOUSE HAS BEEN KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF EACH STEP IN THE ISSUE OF THE MARRIAGE PROPOSALS SINCE THE GENEVA MEETING.

THE EMBASSY THEREFORE HOPES THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC WILL GIVE EXPEDITIOUS AND FAVORABLE  
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CONSIDERATION TO THE TWELVE CASES ALREADY PRESENTED, AS WELL AS OTHER SUCH CASES WHICH MAY IN THE FUTURE BE PRESENTED, TO PERMIT THE SYRIAN WOMEN WHO HAVE RECEIVED PROPOSALS OF MARRIAGE TO DEPART SYRIA FOR THE PURPOSE OF JOINING THEIR PROSPECTIVE HUSBANDS IN THE UNITED STATES. SYRIAN AGREEMENT IN THIS HUMANITARIAN MATTER CANNOT HELP BUT STRENGTHEN THE EXISTING FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SYRIAN AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLE.

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MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009